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OFFICE OF INTERNAL OVERSIGHT SERVICES  
AUDIT AND MANAGEMENT CONSULTING DIVISION

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To: Mr. Jean-Claude Aimé, Executive Secretary  
United Nations Compensation Commission

From: Esther Stern, Director   
Audit and Management Consulting Division, OIOS

Subject: OIOS Assignment No. AE1999/8/1: Review of the Implementation  
of the UNCC Integrated Database - An Interim Report

**I. Background**

1. In my memorandum of 2 March 1999, I outlined the four phases of activities that OIOS planned to carry out during the year concerning the implementation of the new Integrated Data Base (IDB) at UNCC. This phased approach was based on the IDB implementation schedule established at the beginning of the year and included:

A. Phase I - which was to review (during the second quarter of 1999) the methodologies and processes that would be used to ensure that the functions/facilities planned for the new IDB were in line with the operating and information requirements of UNCC's functional units;

B. Phase II - which was to review (also during the second quarter) the methodologies and processes that management and staff would be using to monitor, control and carry out the migration and conversion of existing claim and payment data into the IDB;

C. Phase III - which was to review (during the third quarter) the actual data migration and conversion process results as existing claim and payment data was brought forward into the IDB; and,

D. Phase IV - which was to review (late in 1999 or early 2000, after the full IDB had been implemented and is operational) the provisions and procedures used within UNCC for controlling access to the IDB and maintenance of its data contents and application processes.

2. IDB implementation, however, has taken longer than expected as the tasks and activities that had to be carried out to assimilate, validate and normalise existing claim and payment data proved much more complex and time consuming than originally estimated. As a result, Phases I and II of our planned activities have only been recently completed. This interim report,

therefore, presents the results of our activities for Phases I and II, and sets out a revised schedule for completing the activities for Phases III and IV.

## **II. IDB Implementation - Phases I and II**

### *Scope and objectives*

3. Phase I of our work focused on assisting the Information Systems Services Section (ISS) to develop and implement the methodologies and processes that would ensure that the IDB would meet and satisfy UNCC's managerial, operational and functional requirements. Recognising that UNCC's functional units had different requirements, our objective was to ensure that the needs and requirements of senior management, the secretariat, legal services, finance/administration and claims processing units were considered, evaluated and included in the design and specifications of the new IDB and its associated application processes.

4. Phase II of our work focused on assisting ISS to develop and implement the strategies and methodologies that would be used within UNCC to bring existing claim and payment data into the IDB. Our objective was to assist ISS to develop and implement the monitoring and control mechanisms and procedures needed to validate and confirm the completeness, accuracy and consistency of existing claim and payment data as it was placed in the IDB.

5. The design and construction of the IDB, however, were dependent on both functional user requirements and the condition of claim and payment data already in existence. ISS therefore carried out both the definition of functional requirements, and the conversion and migration of existing data as interrelated parallel activities. In line with this approach, which we fully concurred with, we carried out our review of Phases I and II as parallel activities.

### *A summary of UNCC activities*

6. Appropriate to the technical nature of the IDB Project, ISS assumed responsibility for co-ordinating project related tasks and activities, and working level groups were formed with representatives from ISS and each operational unit within UNCC. Meeting on a weekly or biweekly basis, these groups focused on: defining the functions and processes that the IDB had to provide; analyzing and reviewing existing claim and payment data to ascertain the accuracy, completeness and integrity of the data; preparing and/or cleanup of the data so that it would be suitable for posting to the IDB; and, developing strategies, methodologies and processes that would be used for placing existing data into the IDB. These groups also established and monitored schedules for completing these activities and provided senior management with the status of such activities and minutes of each meeting.

### *Our assessment of these activities*

7. We found that the approach adopted by ISS and the operational units (combining the activities of Phases I and II into parallel activities) was both appropriate and effective as it provided ISS and the operational units with a more complete perspective of the condition of existing claim and payment data, and a forum to discuss, explore and finalise the functions and facilities that the IDB would provide. We commend UNCC for adopting this approach and note

that it is in line with the best practices recommended by information technology industry experts for the design and implementation of integrated database systems such as the IDB. We believe that continuation of this approach throughout the remaining phases of the project will help to ensure that IDB functionality and processes are in line with requirements.

*Lessons that can be learned*

8. As with all large and complex undertakings, management and the IDB working level groups had to:

- Address and resolve issues that could not be defined at the start of the project;
- Carry out unplanned but essential tasks and activities for IDB implementation;
- Seek a balance in the assignment of human resources to the project to ensure that ongoing operations were adequately provided for and supported; and,
- Monitor and revise project activities and schedules of completion based on the above.

9. ISS and the operational units were successful in developing a work plan and schedule for the project. By using the work plan and schedule, the working level groups were able to monitor and review the status of project tasks and activities. By adopting this methodology, ISS and the operational units have been able to complete project related activities while also providing support for ongoing operations. We believe that the success of the project thus far is hinged on the use of this project management methodology, and recommend that UNCC continue to use this methodology for the remaining tasks and activities of the project.

10. In forming the working level groups, ISS has included all of UNCC's operational units. We also noted that a representative of senior management also participated in many of the working level groups. We believe that the broad representation and participation by operational units and senior management should help to ensure that the functions and processes provided by the IDB are in line with their individual needs and requirements. We encourage the continuation of this practice.

### **III. IDB Implementation - Phases III and IV**

#### **A. Phase III**

11. As previously noted, OIOS' Phase III activities were to focus on the actual migration and conversion processes/activities that were to be carried out as existing claim and payment data was placed in the IDB. Noting, however, that actual implementation of the IDB will change the basis or foundation that UNCC uses to record financial information, the work of the United Nations Boards of Auditors will also be affected by implementation of the IDB. Noting also that OIOS and the Board will both rely on the accuracy and validity of IDB data, we have co-ordinated our activities regarding IDB implementation with them. This has resulted in a change

of plans wherein the Board of Auditors, rather than OIOS, will carry out the activities outlined for Phase III of the IDB implementation project. It is our understanding that the Board intends to expand the scope of the audit it will begin later this month to include these activities.

B. Phase IV

12. As also noted previously, we had envisioned our Phase IV activities to start after the IDB was fully implemented and in operation for several months. This phase is also dependent on the results of the work to be carried out by the Board of Auditors. We therefore do not anticipate beginning Phase IV of our planned activities until the second quarter of next year.

**IV. Acknowledgement**

13. We wish to thank the management and staff of UNCC for their cooperation and assistance in helping us to carry out our review of Phases I and II of the IDB implementation project.



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